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KNOWLEDGE

VOL 3 DECEMBER 2009

OFFICIAL SAFETY MAGAZINE OF THE U.S. ARMY

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U.S. ARMY
ARMY STRONG.

THE BAND OF BROTHERS & SISTERS

KNOWLEDGE

OFFICIAL SAFETY MAGAZINE OF THE U.S. ARMY

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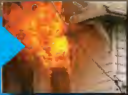

U.S. ARMY COMBAT READINESS/SAFETY CENTER

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We welcome your feedback. Please e-mail comments to **safe.knowledge@conus.army.mil**.

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CELEBRATI

As we observe the holiday season, Soldiers both here and abroad have many reasons to celebrate. Many of you will be spending time with Family and friends, while others will be celebrating a safe return home from an extended overseas deployment. There is additional cause for celebration as we at the U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center continue to review accident statistics for fiscal 2009. During this single year, our Army's total accidental fatalities dropped to their lowest number since the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001. As a result of your engagement and dedication to safety each and every day, approximately 30 more Soldiers are alive in 2009 to spend the holidays with their loved ones.

Even with these successes, there is more work to be done. In the first few weeks of fiscal 2010, our Army experienced a rash of off-duty fatalities that threaten to reverse the positive gains made

> “I **ENCOURAGE** you to ensure your junior **LEADERS** are actively engaged with their **SOLDIERS** and reinforce the principles and **PRACTICES** we know to be **SUCCESSFUL** in **MITIGATING** risk and preventing **ACCIDENTAL** losses.”

NG THE SEASON

in 2009. The circumstances leading to each of these accidents is nearly identical: speed, lack of seat belts, late evening or early morning travel and alcohol are often all listed as contributing factors. In one particular accident, a 27-year-old Soldier was killed when he lost control of his SUV on an icy interstate highway. The vehicle rolled over three times, ejecting both the Soldier and his fiancée, neither of whom were wearing seat belts. The Soldier was reportedly driving too fast for the road conditions, which had deteriorated due to rain and freezing temperatures. While alcohol was not suspected as a contributing factor, the combination of speed, no seat belts and dangerous road conditions proved lethal for this Soldier.

This accident clearly illustrates a simple but deadly fact that has troubled Army Leaders for many years. When on duty, we expect our Soldiers to adhere to standards of discipline and personal accountability. However, this mindset often fails to carry over into off-duty time. Although we have made impressive progress in reducing off-duty fatalities, indiscipline remains a primary factor in a majority of Soldier-involved, off-duty accidents.

Please continue to encourage your Soldiers to eliminate the distinction between work and play. I encourage you to ensure your junior Leaders are actively engaged with their Soldiers and reinforce the principles and practices we know to be successful in mitigating risk and preventing accidental losses.

But, as you’re aware, engaged leadership is only part of the formula for success. If we are to eliminate risk and reduce these off-duty tragedies, our approach must also include Soldiers taking care of Soldiers, personifying the Band of Brothers and Sisters philosophy. Families embracing risk management and reinforcing the principles and practices we know to be successful in preventing accidental losses during this time of year when holiday stress is high and traveling for most is increasingly hazardous is also a critical part of success.

Winter is upon us at home and in most of our operational theaters. Sleet, snow and ice are creating treacherous driving conditions across much of the United States, necessitating extra caution for all drivers on our nation’s roadways. Some Soldiers are also gearing up for winter sports such as skiing and snowboarding and must be mindful of the risks associated with these activities. The USACR/Safety Center team has developed several new posters, videos and other media as part of our current Army Safe Fall/Winter safety campaign, all available for your use on our Web site (https://safety.army.mil/).

Our Army has made great strides over the past eight years, and I am confident we will continue this downward trend as we move forward into the New Year. Thank you all for what you do every day to keep our Band of Brothers and Sisters safe. I wish each of you and your Families a happy, healthy and safe holiday season!«

Army Safe is Army Strong!

WILLIAM T. WOLF
Brigadier General, USA
Director of Army Safety

DRIVEN TO SUCCEED

LT. COL. DAVID WILSON
121st Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Brigade,
1st Armored Division (HBCT)
Fort Bliss, Texas

A good driver's training program can set the stage for a successful deployment. For the 121st Brigade Support Battalion (BSB) "Iron Hammer," 4th Brigade, 1st Armored Division, Fort Bliss, Texas, this training not only netted licensed and proficient drivers, but also logistics achievers. The result: In the first 100 days of battle, the battalion drove more than 148,000 miles and conducted more than 65 combat logistics convoys without an accident.

The 121 BSB began its preparation for deployment to Operation Iraqi Freedom in July 2008. The unit had just undergone a significant personnel turnover as a result of Army Force Generation. The unit's training strategy was simple: look at its capacity to shoot, move, communicate and sustain. This required the Iron Hammer to establish a driver's training program that would be sustainable even in battle. This was essential since the unit was only at 67 percent strength at the time it started retraining for combat operations.

Building a Winning Training Program

The commander's focus was establishing the building blocks for a quality driver's training program that would set the conditions for success. The first step was identifying previous master drivers and instructors within the formation, as well as identifying candidates who could be trained and certified to assist in setting up and running the program. This allowed the unit to take advantage of the existing experts within the formation to establish a program that would include training, testing, certification and sustainment phases with composite risk management (CRM) incorporated throughout.

The next step was to recertify existing master drivers and certify new ones. The unit also focused its attention on getting personnel interviewed and scheduled for new training — including recertifying drivers who no longer met the existing licensing requirements in Army Regulation (AR) 385-10, The Army Safety Program. Concurrently, the unit safety council worked to establish metrics for safety, participated in the training and incorporated lessons learned into daily battalion operations.

Looking ahead to the upcoming deployment and potentially falling in on the new Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles, the brigade senior maintenance technician was able to acquire several training slots at MRAP University at Red River, Texas. This training certified senior Leaders to train and license personnel for all variants of the vehicles; this would serve us later as we hit the Central Command area of responsibility. Our senior mechanics were also able to take advantage of a four-week maintenance course at Red River.

Back at Fort Bliss, 121 BSB established a driver's course that consisted of on-road, off-road, highway and obstacle negotiation. Keeping in mind that operating recovery equipment could present some challenges in theater, particularly with MRAPs, 121 BSB coordinated with Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md., and arranged to have the Ordnance Center and School send its recovery mobile training team to Fort Bliss to assist in training and certificating recovery personnel and drivers on the safest and most effective recovery techniques in both tactical and garrison environments.

Without external support, the battalion was also able to build a recovery lane with a mire pit in training area 2E at Fort Bliss. As soon as 121 BSB completed its training, post-wide training was made available for all recovery personnel. In the end, more than 75 recovery personnel from the various units on post were trained and certified. The new recovery lane, constructed solely by the Iron Hammer Battalion with the approval and support of the installation, was also certified.

Development of the Iron Hammer Program of Instruction (POI) took on two forms. One form was a four-day POI designed to recertify existing drivers and bring them up to speed on the regulations for military vehicle operations on and off post. The other form involved a seven-day training program built upon the installation's standard 40-hour course. It included on- and off-road driving, driving during daytime and night — including using night vision devices — and how to handle obstacles. This all culminated with the drivers taking a check ride, performing preventive maintenance checks and services and a written test to demonstrate their understanding of CRM.

As we worked through both POIs, it was evident we would have to adjust them since newly assigned personnel were not as thoroughly trained as 121 BSB Soldiers at Fort Bliss. The battalion command sergeant major's "Soldier Gage" program ensured junior Leaders designated new Soldiers for driver's training and evaluated their fitness to successfully operate military equipment. From this

assessment, the junior Leaders recommended candidates for the Iron Hammer Driver's Training Academy to their unit commanders. This enabled Leaders to track their Soldiers' progress through the training, ensuring they achieved proficiency operating the vehicles on which they trained.

Leaders Ensure Standards are Met

The battalion selected a warrant officer and a senior maintenance noncommissioned officer to serve as the officer in charge (OIC) and NCOIC of the Iron Hammer Driver's Training Academy and provided them with all the necessary resources and equipment to execute the program to standard. Training was conducted at the battalion level to ensure standards were consistently enforced and so the same subject matter experts provided the training to all the participating Soldiers. This allowed us to reach and maintain a "band of excellence" for driver's training within the battalion.

Upon building a baseline core of drivers, we shifted our efforts to ensuring everyone was assigned to a vehicle as a crewmember, whether they were a driver, truck commander (TC) or passenger. From there, we traversed our attention on the TCs and found some personnel designated as TCs were not licensed on that piece of equipment. Seeing this as a shortfall, units enrolled those individuals in the Iron Hammer Driver's Training Academy for training and certification.

Knowing that having a sufficient number of qualified operators was critical, the battalion expanded training to create redundant capabilities within the ranks that would create a buffer and compensate for Soldiers identified as nondeployable. The battalion set a goal to get 80 percent of the formation licensed on equipment within the battalion. By the time they deployed to the National Training Center (NTC), the battalion had reached 74 percent.

Taking the Iron Hammer Driver's Training Academy with them, they were able to close the gap at the NTC during preparatory training/certification, which allowed the battalion to move into the "box" in one trip without making flips or requiring assistance. As the battalion touched down in Kuwait for reception, staging, onward movement and integration (RSOI), it was able to enroll its convoy security element immediately into MRAP driver's training at Camp Buehring, where drivers received instruction on the MaxxPro variant of the MRAP. This was good familiarization training; however, once we pushed into southern Iraq, the unit we were conducting RIP/TOA with was completely outfitted with the Caiman Plus variant of the MRAP.

Because the training we received at Camp Buehring did not cover the Caiman, our drivers needed an additional 150 miles of daytime training and 75 miles of night driving before they could be certified to operate their MRAPs. Since the battalion had sent personnel to MRAP University prior to deployment and the program manager of MRAP New Equipment Training (NET) in Iraq honored this training, we instituted the Iron Hammer Driver's Training Academy using our seven trained master drivers. We were then immediately able to train and certify drivers on the Caiman Plus MRAP variant and mobilized this team to reach our outlying forward operating bases.

Additionally, we sent NCOs to the Logistics Support Area Balad to attend the MRAP Theater Master Driver's Course. This training focused on the Caiman Plus and MaxxPro Plus MRAPs, further enhancing our instructional capability on operations with the Caiman Plus. We ran a monthly driver's training course to license new drivers and provide sustainment training, which helped us fill the gaps for

personnel going on rest and relaxation leave, emergency leave and for illnesses and injuries that affected our driver pool. We were able to license half of the formation within the first 45 days. Our priority was training the sustainment replenishment operations (SRO) security team, as well as the platoons of the distribution company and forward support companies of the BSB.

Based on CRM and the Soldier's unfamiliarity with our routes for the SRO mission, for the first 30 days of operations, the commander directed that the combat logistics convoy speed for MRAP vehicles would not exceed 25 mph, with a catch-up speed of 35 mph, as necessary. This allowed Soldiers to become familiar with the route — which was critical due to the threat of improvised explosive devices and the handling characteristics of the MRAPs, such as breaking distance and the swaying caused by the high center of gravity.

The intent was to follow a crawl-walk-run model as we executed our mission. This approach not only built the drivers' confidence with their MRAPs, it also enabled them to become familiar with every bump, rock, trash pile and dirt berm. This resulted in valuable input into the unit's route-focused intelligence preparation for the battlefield program.

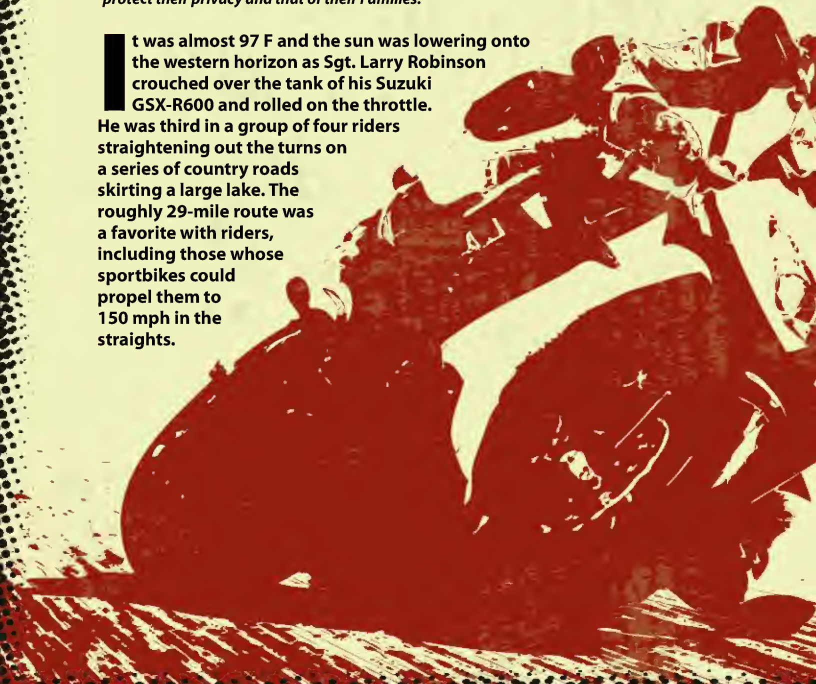
The result of placing a high value on training and teamwork was success on the battlefield. This success is tied to the success of the Iron Hammer Driver's Training Academy and ultimately is attributed to the vision and foresight of the battalion's leadership to build this capacity within the formation. This enabled the unit to rapidly adjust to changing conditions and continually provide seamless support to the brigade combat team.«

Bad Comp

COMPILED BY THE KNOWLEDGE STAFF

Editor's note: The names of the individuals mentioned in this story have been changed to protect their privacy and that of their Families.

It was almost 97 F and the sun was lowering onto the western horizon as Sgt. Larry Robinson crouched over the tank of his Suzuki GSX-R600 and rolled on the throttle. He was third in a group of four riders straightening out the turns on a series of country roads skirting a large lake. The roughly 29-mile route was a favorite with riders, including those whose sportbikes could propel them to 150 mph in the straights.



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Leading the ride was Staff Sgt. Victor Hernandez, a friend who served in the same unit with Robinson. Hernandez rode with an off-post, nonsanctioned riding group that Robinson wanted to join. He'd been riding as a prospect, but a pending permanent change of station move nixed his plans.

Although Hernandez and one of the other riders belonged to the group, it was not a group-sponsored ride and neither rider wore the group's distinctive vest. The group was known for its riding culture, which was displayed on its Web site. There, videos showed stunting on streets and interstates and a member exceeding 150 mph. And there was history here as far as the Army was concerned.

During the previous 13 months, three Soldiers affiliated with the group had suffered motorcycle accidents. Two of those Soldiers died, while the third suffered a permanent disability. That afternoon, the culture that had killed and crippled those Soldiers was on display as Hernandez led his friends on their ride.

The riders turned north on a road bordering the east side of a lake. Hernandez had lengthened his lead and was playing "catch me if you can" as he pulled out of sight of the other riders. As they approached a dam, they saw a slower-moving cruiser motorcycle in their lane and decided to pass it. The rider in front of Robinson ignored the double yellow line indicating a "no-passing" zone and whipped around the cruiser. Now it was Robinson's turn.

As he approached the slower bike, the road curved to the left as it crossed the dam. Robinson passed the cruiser quickly and pulled back into his lane. However, during the process, he ended up too far to the right — dangerously close to the gravel-surfaced shoulder. The Suzuki was Robinson's first street bike and he'd only been riding for about a month. He'd taken the Motorcycle Safety Foundation's (MSF) Basic *RiderCourse*; however, he was no longer on the course's slow-speed, controlled environment. Now, he was in a sticky situation for which he wasn't prepared.

Unable to handle the curve, gravel crunched beneath the Suzuki's tires as he drifted onto the narrow right shoulder, which was bordered by a guardrail. Now, everything was up for grabs. The Suzuki lost traction and struck a guardrail support. The impact launched Robinson 84 feet through the air and down the shoulder until

> "Robinson **IGNORED** the **POSTED** speed limits, not realizing **THEY** were **THERE** for his **SAFETY.**"

he slammed head-first into a guardrail support.

Chris and Mary Burkhart were driving in the southbound lane when they saw the accident unfold in front of them. Mary Burkhart stopped the car, grabbed her cell phone and called 911. She and her husband rendered aid to Robinson, following the instructions of the 911 operator. The rider behind Robinson also called 911. Hernandez was stopped two miles ahead, waiting for his friends to catch up. When they didn't, he rode back to see what had happened.

The county volunteer fire department was near the dam and emergency medical services (EMS) personnel arrived within three minutes. They checked Robinson and called for a helicopter as they attempted to resuscitate him. By the time the helicopter arrived 12 minutes later, Robinson had not revived, so the EMS technicians contacted the county justice of the peace. An hour earlier, Robinson had been racing down the road. Now, he was lying dead beside it, the victim of blunt-force trauma to his head.

Why did he die? Robinson ignored the posted speed limits, not realizing they were there for his safety. With scarcely a month's street-riding experience, he didn't know how to handle the situation he was in. As a result, when things went bad, he made a poor decision that ended his life.

Then there was Hernandez. As Robinson's Leader and friend, he was responsible for the younger Soldier during their off-duty time together. He set an example by the way he rode that afternoon. It was an example other riders could die trying to follow.

That afternoon's bad decisions cost a Family their son, Hernandez his friend and the Army an experienced Iraq-war veteran. Those decisions, however, didn't happen in a vacuum. Coloring them was a dangerous culture lurking outside the gates of many Army installations. That culture will be addressed below in the article "Divided Loyalties."«

DIVIDED LOYALTIES

COMPILED BY THE KNOWLEDGE STAFF

One of the statements in the Soldier's Creed is, "I am a Warrior and a member of the team. I serve the people of the United States and live the Army values." This and other statements define the principles by which Soldiers live and fight. But what if some Soldiers give their loyalty to a different "team" than the Army and Soldiers die as a result? Think that doesn't happen? Think again. It has on multiple occasions.

Soldiers are being drawn into nonsanctioned, off-post motorcycle groups whose reckless, thrill-seeking culture forces them to divide their loyalties. The requirement that riders be loyal to these groups can pit Soldiers against their loyalty to the Army. While the Army expects Soldiers to ride lawfully, these clubs often encourage the opposite.

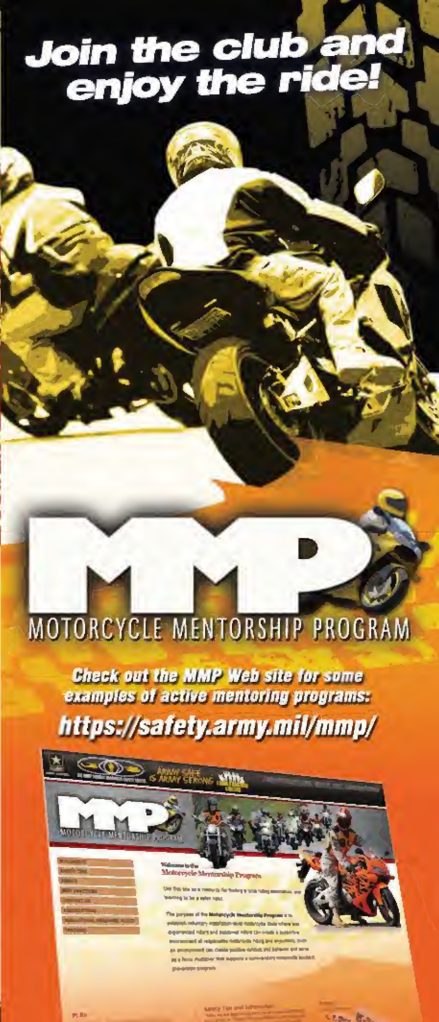
And what happens when Soldiers die while riding with such groups? Typically, these groups have been uncooperative with Army efforts to find out how the Soldier was killed. Loyal to the group, Soldiers sometimes view protecting it as more important than preventing future deaths — including those of their own comrades. So how does being willing to set up a buddy for a fall stack up against the statement, "I will never leave a fallen comrade"?

Not every non-Army-sanctioned riding group has this kind of culture. Some provide a positive alternative for Soldiers who don't have the option of joining a motorcycle mentorship program. The key is discovering the group's culture before trying to join, and that's easy to do. Most groups have Web sites showing their activities. Visit those sites and

look at the images and videos. It shouldn't take long to discover the group's culture.

Why should this matter to you? In his article "Helping New Riders" in the July 2009 Knowledge, Sgt. 1st Class Frederick McMullen — a sportbike enthusiast — had this to say about these groups: "These groups don't care about the safety of new riders; all they want to do is show these "newbies" how to "really" ride. They don't care who is weak and might need some help; they just want to get an adrenaline rush. When new riders find themselves in such groups, peer pressure and lack of experience can lead to horrific endings."

That's what happened to Sgt. Larry Robinson in the article "Bad Company."«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MOTORCYCLE MENTORSHIP PROGRAM
Check out the MMP Web site for some examples of active mentoring programs:
https://safety.army.mil/mmp/
ARMY SAFE IS ARMY STRONG
Welcome to the Motorcycle Mentorship Program

DES OBSERVATIONS
for 2009 Aviation Trends

COL. STEPHEN C. SMITH
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U.S. Army Aviation Center of Excellence
Fort Rucker, Ala.

I wrote an article in the April 2008 issue of Knowledge entitled "Breaking the Cycle" that focused on the aviation branch posture being influenced by the requirements of the Overseas Contingency Operations (OCOs). Since then, we've made great strides as a branch in tackling many of the issues identified in that article. While we've seen improvements in certain areas, we must not be lulled into a false sense of security by our successes.

Our challenges in 2008 included short unit dwell times, hasty readiness level (RL) progressions to meet crew requirements for deployment, high-flying-hour operating tempos in theater, aviators with extensive flight time in one mission set and frequent permanent changes of station from redeploying to deploying units. As members of the Directorate of Evaluation and Standardization (DES) visited units around the world, we observed several trends related to these challenges. These trends included excessive use of waivers, aviators never completing an annual proficiency and readiness test, weak aviator instrument skills, gunnery skill atrophy in combat, low simulation utilization rates and weak air mission commander (AMC) training programs. Because of these inadequacies, human error accidents increased.

Since the changes to Army Regulation 95-1, Flight Regulations, we have seen a marked reduction in waivers to aircrew training program (ATP) requirements. However, the real change has been in the attitudes of commanders. Every commander we visited in the past year has stressed to his or her aviators the need to complete their ATP requirements. Commanders understand that proficiency in certain individual aviator skills (e.g., perform unusual attitude recovery, respond to inadvertent instrument meteorological conditions or other emergencies) aren't routinely used in a combat environment. Nevertheless, these skills are critical to saving lives in combat and when the unit returns to home station.

An Enterprise Approach

Our branch chief, Maj. Gen. James O. Barclay III, recognized many of the challenges of our Combat Aviation Brigade (CAB) commanders and directed our branch to take an Enterprise Approach to training aircrews for deployment. As a result of collaborative efforts of aviation Leaders from the U.S. Army Aviation Center of Excellence, U.S. Army Forces Command, Headquarters-Department of the Army G-3/5/7, U.S. Army Aviation Missile Command, Program Executive Office-Aviation, National Guard Bureau and the U.S. Army Reserve, we have tackled some of the toughest issues faced by CABs and initiated solutions.

We coordinated assistance for RL progressions, provided mobile training and assistance teams to allow Soldiers more time at home station and moved residual aircraft from deploying units to units that needed them most for training. These initiatives have had a positive impact on the CABs' preparation for deployment. Despite these successes, many units continue to have training shortfalls in all airframes, including power management/environmental training, emergency procedures training and AMC training.

Power Management/ Environmental Training

As the Army increases forces in Afghanistan, we've noticed more units are sending their aviators to the Army National Guard's High Altitude Aviation Training School (HAATS) in Gypsum, Colo., as well as conducting collective training in the higher elevations of Fort Bliss. Although this training has proven effective for environmental awareness, we continue to see aviators forgetting some of the basics of power management.

Leaders must ensure aircrews are discussing performance planning card (PPC) information during crew briefs. Crews should also discuss PPC information during team briefs (e.g., when crews are flying in mixed aircraft formations). This is a critical point so all flight crews understand each aircraft's capabilities and limitations. One of the important limitations to understand is when an aircraft will have safe single-engine airspeed capability. If a crew understands this limitation, they can be better prepared to jettison the wing stores, if necessary. They can also be cognizant of potential forced landing areas should an engine fail in flight. Leaders must reiterate to aviators not only the environmental considerations of mountain flying, but also the tactical considerations.

Emergency Procedures Training

When emergencies occur in combat, they are usually not single emergencies like those we typically practice in the traffic pattern. There is no better place to train for such contingencies than in one of our simulators. Despite this, we still see low simulator use by our deployed Longbow crew trainers (LCT). We also have commanders who question the need to take the devices to theater.

With the fielding of transportable simulators for the CH-47F and UH-60L and M models, our assault battalions and general support aviation battalions now have the same capability as our Apache battalions have had with the LCT. We need to take advantage of this tremendous capability. We should be deploying these systems with our units and putting our crews through a rigorous emergency procedures training program that forces them to recognize and react to multiple emergencies.

AMC Training Program

DES is seeing great improvement in AMC training, but we still have a way to go. A strong AMC program is important because it is our junior warrant and commissioned officers who are leading our formations. We shouldn't expect them to learn

all it takes to be an AMC simply from flying as part of a team. The best programs have commander involvement using various training vignettes in the aviation combined arms tactical trainer (AVCATT) or even in the actual aircraft. One unit we visited even had a tiered approach to AMC. The first tier served as the AMC for a similar aircraft team, the second tier served as the AMC for a mixed formation and the third tier served as the AMC for the most complex missions.

Conclusion

One year ago, we thought we would see some relief from the realities of the OCOs as we drew down forces in Iraq. Although we've drawn down brigade combat teams, we haven't seen a comparable reduction in aviation forces. At the same time, we've seen an increase of aviation requirements in Afghanistan. These additional requirements will place an added burden on our already stretched force.

It is paramount for commanders to ensure their crews focus on the basics I've listed above if aircrews are to be adequately prepared for the rigors of combat and prevent needless accidents. If necessary, it is also important for commanders to seek assistance from the Aviation Enterprise to help train their aviators in these times of short unit dwells. Just as important, commanders must ensure their crews continue training in combat to maintain their readiness. If we can accomplish these goals, we might be able to not only "Break the Cycle," but also prevent another deadly cycle from beginning.«

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Makin' a List

TRACEY RUSSELL
Ground Task Force
U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center
Fort Rucker, Ala.

The month of December is host to various holidays to be celebrated with Family and friends. As you make plans to enjoy your favorite traditions, take time to add safety to your holiday "to-do" lists.

Fire

Fire safety is particularly important this time of year. Typical holiday traditions include lights on Christmas trees and homes, the lighting of candles on menorahs and kinaras, and fireworks to celebrate the New Year. All present fire hazards that should be taken into consideration when planning your holiday activities.

According to the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), fire departments respond to an estimated 128,700 fires each December. These fires result, on average, in 1,650 injuries and 415 deaths. The National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) provides the following safety tips for holiday decorations:

- Choose a tree with fresh, green needles that do not fall off when touched. Before placing the tree in the stand, cut off 1 to 2 inches from the base of the trunk.
- Make sure the tree is at least three feet away from any heat source, such as fireplaces, radiators, candles, heat vents or lights, and that it's not blocking an exit.
- Add water to the tree stand. Be sure to add water daily and always turn off Christmas tree lights before leaving home or going to bed.
- Choose decorations that are flame resistant or flame retardant. If you have an artificial tree, be sure it is labeled, certified or identified by the manufacturer as fire retardant.
- Keep lit candles away from decorations and other items that can burn. Never use lit candles to decorate a tree.
- Use lights that have the label of an independent testing laboratory.
- Replace any string of lights that has worn or broken cords or loose bulb connections. Connect no more than three strands of mini-light sets and a maximum of 50 bulbs for screw-in bulbs.
- Use plastic clips, not nails, to hang lights so the cords do not get damaged.

Food

Make sure your holiday food preparations are near the top of your safety list.

Statistics from the USFA indicate that cooking is the leading cause of residential fires during the month of December, accounting for 41 percent. Remember the old adage "the cook who leaves the kitchen burns"? Adhere to that message and never leave cooking fires unattended. Watch out for items such as oven mitts and dish towels, which can catch on fire if kept near an open flame or heating element. Don't forget to keep an eye on children and pets to ensure they're not injured.

While you don't want to overcook your meal, you also should be careful not to undercook it. To ensure turkeys and hams are adequately cooked, it is recommended they reach a minimum internal temperature of 170 F. Check the temperature in the breast for a turkey and the thickest part of a ham.

Before cooking, it is recommended meats are thawed in a refrigerator. Do not leave unthawed meat unrefrigerated for more than one hour. These precautions, along with frequent hand washing and cleaning of food and preparation surfaces, will go a long way in preventing food-borne illnesses.

Travel

Many of us will be traveling to spend the holidays with Family and friends. Before you embark on your trip, take time to ensure your vehicle is in proper working order (tires, lights, emergency items, etc.), check the weather and get plenty of rest. When it's time to hit the road, wear your seat belt and make sure your passengers also buckle up.

If your "holiday cheer" involves alcohol, use a designated driver. Fatigue, alcohol and speed are common factors in automobile accidents. Making frequent rest stops, refraining from alcohol when you will be driving and obeying posted speed limits are simple ways to make your holiday more enjoyable.

Shopping

As you head off to the local shopping center in search of that perfect gift, consider that large crowds of holiday shoppers and adverse weather conditions can make parking lots and stores difficult to navigate. Injuries resulting from slips, trips and falls are one of the leading causes of emergency room visits each year. Be particularly cautious on wet or icy surfaces. It's also a good idea to wear low-heeled shoes with a treaded sole. When heading back to your vehicle, make sure you don't overload yourself with packages and always remain aware of your surroundings.

When selecting gifts for children, make sure you choose items that are age appropriate. Many toys will have the appropriate age range printed on the side of the box. It's best to avoid toys that have sharp edges, present an electrical or choking hazard or shoot projectiles. Don't forget the proper safety gear — such as helmets and pads — when purchasing gifts like bicycles and skateboards. Also make sure you have the right tools available when you come across those three dreaded words: "Some assembly required."

Fireworks

If you are planning to ring in the New Year with fireworks, be extremely cautious and pay particular attention to any children in the area. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, an estimated 9,800 people were treated in emergency rooms for injuries from fireworks in 2007. Of those, more than half were children.

Fireworks should always be supervised by adults, and young children should never be allowed to handle them. Even fireworks some might consider "safe" can injure. For example, there are more injuries to children under five from sparklers than from any other type of fireworks.

Before you start lighting fireworks, make sure there is a bucket of water or a garden hose handy in case of a fire. Never point or throw fireworks at another person; light them one at a time and move back quickly. State and local laws on fireworks vary, so be sure you are following the appropriate laws.

In the midst of the holiday season — and the chaos that often accompanies it — it's easy to lose sight of safety. A bit of preplanning can assist you in alleviating holiday stress and trips to the emergency room. Enjoy a wonderful holiday season with those you hold near and dear by following Santa's example: making a list and checking it twice!«

Be a "Wreck"-less

BOB VAN ELSBERG
Strategic Communication Directorate
U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center
Fort Rucker, Ala.

An Army accident report last winter read, in part: "Soldiers hit a patch of black ice after crossing a bridge and spun out of control, going into a narrow ditch and rolling the vehicle one complete time. Vehicle (was) traveling approximately 45 mph. Soldiers were all wearing their seat belts. All Soldiers were transported to local hospital … treated and released."

This group of Army National Guardsmen encountered an extra "surprise" as they drove to their weekend drill. Fortunately, they chose to wear their seat belts and walked away from the experience wiser and none the worse for wear.

But Guardsmen heading to drill won't be the only Soldiers on the road this winter. During the holidays, many Soldiers will be on the road to visit Family and friends. However, unlike the Guardsmen above, your trip doesn't have to end with you in the hospital and your car in a ditch. Check out the following tips from the National Safety Council so your winter trips will have happy endings.

Weather

At any temperature, whether it is minus 20 F or above 90 F, the weather affects road and driving conditions and can pose serious problems. Because of that, it is important to plan your trip in accordance with the weather forecast.

Your Vehicle

Prepare your vehicle for winter. Start with a checkup that includes:

- Checking the ignition, brakes, wiring, hoses and fan belts.
- Changing and adjusting the spark plugs.
- Checking the air, fuel and emission filters and PCV valve.
- Inspecting the distributor (if you have an older vehicle that has one).
- Checking the battery.
- Checking the tires for air, sidewall wear and tread depth.
- Checking the antifreeze level and freeze line.

Your vehicle should also have a tune-up to ensure better gas mileage, quicker starts and faster response for pick-up and passing power. Check your vehicle's owner's manual for the recommended intervals for tune-ups.

Winter Driver

Necessary Equipment

An emergency situation on the road can arise at any time and you must be prepared. Following the tune-up, ensure you have a full tank of gas and fresh antifreeze in your radiator. In addition, you should carry the following items in your trunk:

- Properly inflated spare tire, wheel wrench and tripod-type jack
- Shovel
- Jumper cables
- Tow and tire chains
- Bag of salt or cat litter
- Tool kit
- Flares

Essential Supplies

Be prepared with a "survival kit" that should always remain in the vehicle. Replenish it after each use. Essential supplies include:

- Working flashlight and extra batteries
- Reflective triangles and brightly colored cloth
- Compass
- First aid kit
- Exterior windshield washer fluid
- Ice scraper and snow brush
- Wooden stick matches in a waterproof container
- Scissors and string/cord
- Nonperishable, high-energy foods like unsalted canned nuts, dried fruits and hard candy

In addition, if you're driving long distances in cold, snowy and icy conditions, you should also carry supplies to keep you warm such as heavy woolen mittens, socks, a cap and blankets.

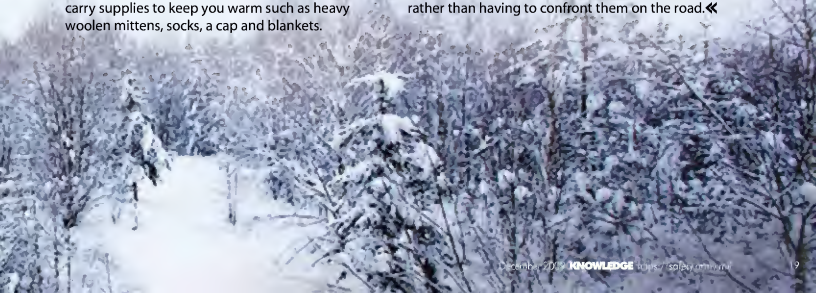
If You Become Stranded

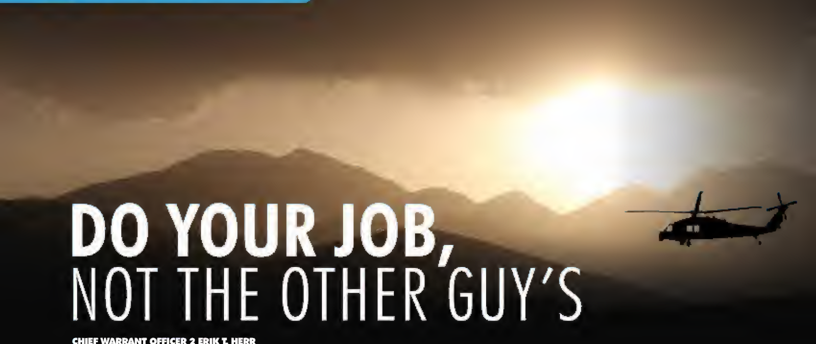
In case you do become stranded, follow these tips:

- Do not leave your vehicle unless you know exactly where you are, how far it is to possible help and are certain you will improve your situation.
- To attract attention, light two flares and place one at each end of the vehicle a safe distance away. Hang a brightly colored cloth from your antenna.
- If you are sure the vehicle's exhaust pipe is not blocked, run the engine and heater for about 10 minutes every hour or so, depending upon the amount of gas in the tank.
- To protect yourself from frostbite and hypothermia, use the woolen items and blankets to keep warm.
- Keep at least one window open slightly. Heavy snow and ice can seal a vehicle shut.
- Eat a hard candy to keep your mouth moist.

Tips

As a Soldier, you have the Travel Risk Planning System (TRiPS) available online at https://safety.army.mil. All you have to do is log into TRiPS and follow the easy directions to see areas where you can increase your margin of safety on the road. By taking an overall look at your travel plans, TRiPS can alert you to dangers you may not be aware of and, at the same time, evaluate the level of risk for your trip. This handy online tool helps you to avoid hazards rather than having to confront them on the road.«





DO YOUR JOB, NOT THE OTHER GUY'S

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 2 ERIK T. HERR
T Troop, 4th Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment
Fort Hood, Texas

Nothing will make you reflect on how lucky you are more than escaping a bad situation unscathed and beating the odds that were stacked against you. Predicting weather in Iraq is difficult at best. And even though the Air Force weather forecasters are highly trained professionals, if they give you a weather brief now, it can change quickly.

On an early fall morning, my mission was to fly pilot (PI) as Chalk 2 of a flight of two UH-60s conducting a VIP movement from Victory Base Complex to Talil, Iraq. This was a routine mission for our unit, and both crews had flown it several times. The weather brief that morning showed good visibility for the moment, but decreasing slowly throughout the day. Our mission window looked good; however, we knew when we got over open stretches of desert, the weather could quickly turn bad.

During our crew brief, we addressed the weather issue methodically, listing alternate global positioning system (GPS)-based approaches, fuel stops if maintaining visual meteorological conditions (though visibility was dropping) and even the dreaded "land where you are and stay put until weather improves." Carrying a general officer and division sergeant major made the last option the least desirable.

I had been a pilot in command (PC) for less than 100 hours, but I felt it was my responsibility to raise several questions concerning this mission. My gut instinct was to oppose flying this mission. However, by the time we finished assessing the mission, I felt better and agreed we were making the correct choice.

We departed on time with good weather and made our first stop on schedule, but not with the weather we had planned. As we approached Talil, weather deteriorated to just over a mile and was decreasing steadily as we shut down the aircraft. After checking with the weather briefers, we found the weather was "supposed" to be good for our next leg of the flight. As predicted, weather improved to our re-briefed minimum and we launched to our next destination.

We experienced no en route problems as we proceeded to our next destination, a small combat outpost with tall light poles in the landing zone (LZ). The general and his sergeant major departed the LZ and we shut down the aircraft to preserve fuel. As we waited, we saw dust picking up on the horizon, but it was still not close enough to cause us problems. We launched on time with at least three miles visibility and headed north into open desert and increasing winds.

Visibility began to drop as we proceeded on our route; not bad at first, but it certainly was rapidly deteriorating. Before we realized it, the visibility was less than a mile and worsening with the ceiling coming down to the deck. We deliberately maintained visual contact with the ground. We did not want to execute instrument flight rules or GPS approaches because we had not been practicing those tasks and were not proficient on them. Moreover, we had insufficient fuel for a go-around if we didn't break out of the clouds.

Both crews decided to fly to the closest secure forward operating base, which was Dywaniah. Lead found Route Tampa and we changed course. Using the classic IFR procedures (I Follow Roads), we headed for safety. Flying lower and slower, the crew's anxiety and "pucker factor" escalated in the cockpit and the crewmembers grew more impatient with each other. The thought of landing in the sand and waiting even sounded good.

Luck brought us safely through the weather and we were able to land at Dywaniah with visibility less than three-quarters of a mile. Fortune seems to favor the foolish.

Lessons Learned

We could've done many things differently or, perhaps, better on this mission. As we all know, being there is what drives decisions, actions and results — good or bad. Pilots, especially PC-rated pilots, want to be in charge and masters of their own fate. In this case, I was the PI — though a rated PC — flying for a less experienced PC who had less total hours and PC time than I did. I wanted to take over, I wanted the controls and I knew I could do it better. Or could I?

The PC, while he had fewer hours, was still an excellent pilot. He maintained the controls since he already had them. The best thing I could do was to keep doing my job as the pilot not on the controls. The PC brought us safely to our chosen point to land. I didn't need to have the controls.

This mission turned into a great example of crew coordination. The PC maintained the controls and the outside situation, keeping us from hitting light poles, water towers, power lines and/or the ground. I kept all distractions inside the cockpit to an absolute minimum. In the end, we landed safely because the entire crew — pilots and crewmembers — knew their duties and responsibilities and conducted proper crew coordination. Stick to procedures; they can save you, even if they can be uncomfortable.«

ARE YOU READY?

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Wouldn't you like to prevent the loss of personnel and equipment?

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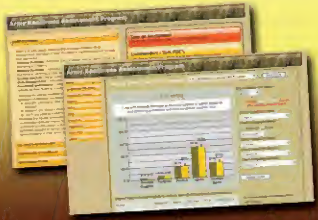


Sign up for your assessment today!
https://unitready.army.mil

UP IN FLAMES

MELISSA ALLEN
U.S. Army Aviation and Missile Command
Redstone Arsenal, Ala.

Technological advances over the past 50 years have certainly made our lives easier, but they should never be a substitute for common sense. Despite what some may think, microwaves, toasters and other kitchen appliances are not personal chefs. When left unattended, bad things can happen.

It was a beautiful morning and I was enjoying my complimentary breakfast at a hotel when I noticed a bad smell. It didn't take long to spot the source. Copious amounts of smoke were billowing out of one of the microwaves in the break area. Several people rushed over, unplugged the appliance and carried it outside, where it would not cause harm to anything. Fortunately, no one was injured.

What bothered me most about this incident was it was preventable. Someone had put sausage biscuits in the microwave without first removing the plastic wrapping and then left the microwave unattended. I hate to break it to you, but, unless your microwave has a sensor cooking feature, it will not automatically stop cooking when your meal is perfectly done. It won't even stop cooking when the food inside catches fire. A microwave will stop cooking when you tell it to stop cooking — whether that's 30 seconds or 30 minutes.

This incident is a prime example of why you should never leave toasters, microwaves or other appliances unattended. These devices do not have the ability to sense when food

FYI

The Home Safety Council recommends the following tips when cooking:

- **Always stay in the kitchen while cooking.**
- **Keep items that can burn, such as dishtowels, paper or plastic bags and curtains at least three feet away from the range top.**
- **Before cooking, roll up your sleeves and use oven mitts. Loose-fitting clothes can touch a hot burner and catch fire.**
- **Always stay by the grill when cooking. Remember that a grill may stay hot for a long time after cooking. Also keep children and pets away from a hot grill.**
- **Keep grills at least 10 feet away from other objects, including the house and any shrubs or bushes.**

DID YOU KNOW?

According to the Home Safety Council's State of Home Safety in America™ Report, fires and burns are the third leading cause of unintentional home injury and related deaths. Fire safety and survival begin with everyone in your household being prepared. Follow these tips to reduce the chance of fire in your home:

- **Make a fire escape plan. Find two exits out of every room and pick a meeting place outside. Remember, practice makes perfect, so hold a Family fire drill at least twice a year.**
- **Install smoke alarms on every level of your home, preferably near or inside every bedroom.**
- **Know how to put out a small pan fire by sliding a lid over the flames.**
- **Teach every Family member to "Stop, Drop, Roll and Cool." If clothes catch fire, drop immediately to the ground, cross your hands over your chest and roll over and over or back and forth to put out the flames. Cool the burned area with cool water and seek medical attention for serious burns.**
- **Consider having a home fire sprinkler system installed in your home.**
- **Learn how and when to use a fire extinguisher.**

is starting to burn and turn themselves off. We have to be the ones responsible for that.

Sure, we're all guilty of doing it at one time or another. You use a commercial break to put your popcorn in the microwave and then go back to the TV until you hear the beep. Most of the time, nothing bad happens. But isn't missing a few minutes of your show worth it if it prevents the possible destruction of your home or the injury or death of you or a loved one?

If a fire does start in your microwave or toaster, follow these tips from the U.S. Fire Administration:

- Keep the microwave or toaster door closed.
- Turn off the appliance.
- If you can safely reach the outlet, unplug the appliance.
- Before using the appliance again, have it checked and serviced by a professional.
- If you are unable to put out the fire, leave immediately and call 911.

WHERE THERE'S SMOKE ...

HOME SAFETY COUNCIL
http://homesafetycouncil.org

Smoke alarms can save your life in a fire, but only if you have enough and they work properly. Do you have enough smoke alarms in your home? Are they located in the right places? Without working smoke alarms, you and your Family may not wake up in time to get to safety if a fire breaks out in your home.

Installing Smoke Alarms

- Smoke rises, so smoke alarms should be mounted high on walls or ceilings. Ceiling-mounted alarms should be installed at least four inches away from the nearest wall. Wall-mounted alarms should be installed four to 12 inches away from the ceiling.
- Make sure the alarm is away from the path of steam from bathrooms and cooking vapors from the kitchen. These can cause false alarms.
- Don't install smoke alarms near windows, doors or ducts. They will not work correctly.

Ensure it Works

- Test your smoke alarms once a month. Push the test button until you hear a loud noise.
- Replace the batteries in your smoke alarms at least once a year, or any time they make a "chirping" sound. This means the battery is low.
- If your smoke alarms are more than 10 years old, get new devices.

Next time you pop a frozen dinner into the microwave or toast a bagel, stick around while it cooks. You might lose five minutes of your day doing something as boring as watching toast brown or leftovers spin in the microwave, but it sure beats what you'd lose in a fire because of your carelessness.«

Purchasing New Smoke Alarms

- Get enough to cover every level of your home, including the basement, and every bedroom.
- If you can, buy "interconnected" smoke alarms. When one alarm goes off, they all sound. This means the alarm nearest you will go off sooner. It gives you more time to get your Family to safety.
- There are two kinds of smoke alarms: photoelectric and ionization. If possible, get some of each kind or buy combination smoke alarms that have both types of sensors.
- Make sure your smoke alarms have been tested for safety by a laboratory. Look for a mark on the box such as ETL, UL or CSA.

For more information, visit http://homesafetycouncil.org.«

Army Safe is Army Strong and that starts with a Soldier's Family. Have the information to help you and your Family stay SAFE.

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 4 PATRICK J. COAKLEY
AH-64D Longbow Apache TAFT
U.S. Army Security Assistance Training Management Organization
Kuwait

BEST PRACTICES:
THE GUNFIGHTER MONTHLY SAFETY PACKET

This article is a success story about our battalion's carefully developed, deliberate and proactive safety training program aimed at teaching composite risk management skills to the men and women of the "Gunfighter" regiment. The monthly safety packets enabled us to recognize when we were most at risk for making a mission-threatening error and, as a result, prevented those mistakes from occurring. This called for effective training skills and levelheaded individual decision-making.

I attended the Senior Aviation Safety Officer (ASO) Course at the U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center from April 27 through May 1, 2009. One of the course requirements was to brief fellow attendees on an effective safety management technique that I had employed as an ASO. For my best practice, I chose to describe the Gunfighter Monthly Safety Packet, which I used while assigned as the task force/battalion ASO for the 1st Attack Reconnaissance Battalion, 1st Aviation Regiment, Combat Aviation Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, Fort Riley, Kan., and during Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) 07-09.

During my brief, Chief Warrant Officer 5 Will C. Chance, U.S. Army Forces Command (FORSCOM) G-3/5/7, Aviation Resource Management Survey (ARMS) team safety inspector, pointed out units that employ monthly safety packets have better documentation of their safety programs and typically do well on ARMS inspections. He also invited me to share my best practices brief at this year's FORSCOM ARMS Conference in Orlando, Fla.

I cannot take credit for developing the safety packet concept, as I'm not sure who originally created it. My first exposure to the safety packet was as a company ASO working for Chief Warrant Officer 4 Kelvin Holt with the 1st Battalion, 501st Aviation (ATK) Regiment, Hanau, Germany. The safety packet focuses on efficiency, education and involvement. These three principles allowed me, along with my team of safety personnel (see author's note on page 27), to spend less time in our offices and more time flying missions and getting involved in the task force's daily operations.

The safety packet increased our safety program's efficiency by providing a structure and timeline for the completion of monthly safety activities by subordinate units (company/troop). This occurred regardless of geographical location or daily schedule (i.e., conducting split-based operations and 24/7 operations for our 15-month deployment).

I distributed the packets at the beginning of the month, either at command and staff meetings or through distribution. The packets contained the required instructions, references, forms and inspection checklists and memoranda templates necessary for safety officers to execute their command support program activities each month.

Some of the specific items in the safety packets included inspections for the following areas: foreign object damage, fire prevention, hearing conservation, environmental control, hazardous materials, radiation (if applicable to the individual subordinate unit) and personal protective equipment (not depicted in the flow chart below, but included in the actual packet). The packet also included a standardized hazard log (HAZLOG) that company and troop safety officers used to record/track their unit's hazards. I subsequently consolidated all the company/troop HAZLOGs into one consolidated master task force/battalion-level HAZLOG to maintain and control all hazards.

The company and troop safety officers also incorporated the standardized memoranda formats to document the completion of their respective unit's monthly safety meeting, as well as the various types of safety awards requests (e.g., flight, ground, driving and impact). The awards requests were subsequently forwarded to the appropriate level chain of command for approval/disapproval, pending write-up verification.

The packets increased the Soldiers' knowledge in many ways. It ensured the assignment of command support programs additional duty personnel and established guidelines for these additional duties. Soldiers, noncommissioned officers (NCOs) and officers assigned to these additional duty positions also became subject matter experts (SMEs) in their areas. This increased Soldiers' awareness of the many areas that required oversight. It also prevented omissions that safety programs historically experience, especially when a unit deploys.

The packets contained curricula for aviators, aviation maintainers and all Soldiers. Classes were given to all company and troop members at monthly safety meetings by the respective SMEs, in addition to company and troop safety officers. These classes provided safety education and professional development for Soldiers, NCOs and officers. Videotaping or hardcopy PowerPoint slides in a make-up book facilitated training for Soldiers not in attendance.

The packet, by design, involved many people in the Gunfighter organization. We believe the more people who are involved in a unit's safety program on a daily basis, the better. Everyone's role is to be a safety officer. Both the task force and company/troop chains of command were involved in reviewing the packets and in the unit safety awards process (see an example of monthly safety packet flow below).

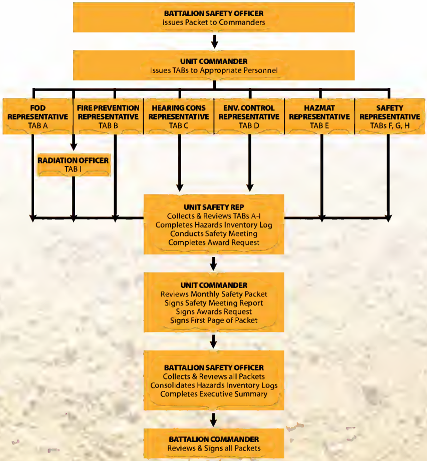
The result was that Task Force Gunfighter was able to safely and efficiently complete predeployment activities comprised of multiple gunneries, rotations at the National Training Center and Joint Readiness Training Center, and deployment in support of OIF 07-09 without a serious incident. We flew more than 28,500 AH-64D Longbow Apache flight hours and 12,000 OH-58D Kiowa Warrior flight hours accident-free.

These accomplishments speak volumes about the effectiveness of individual decisions made by Gunfighter Soldiers while training for combat at the training centers, deploying to Iraq or on block leave at home station. The Gunfighter Monthly Safety Packet was one technique that helped my battalion achieve success.

Author's note: I cannot take complete credit for the success of the packets while assigned to the Gunfighters. Credit certainly needs to be shared with Sgt. 1st Class Duane Moore, Staff Sgt. Joseph Breen, Chief Warrant Officer 3 Philip Hettich, Chief Warrant Officer 3 Michael Robertson, Chief Warrant Officer 3 James Cobb, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Thad Menold, Staff Sgt. Matthew Ruffley, 1st Lt. Mikhail Ovsijenko, Chief Warrant Officer 3 Eric Ries, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Attila Herrera, Task Force 1-1 ARB chain of command/staff/individual Soldiers, and the many additional duty personnel assigned to our command support program. If you would like examples of the safety packet, contact me at patrick.j.coakley@us.army.mil.

EXAMPLE OF MONTHLY SAFETY PACKET FLOW

(Packet configuration/requirements can be tailored due to regulatory/SOP changes.)


BATTALION SAFETY OFFICER
Issues Packet to Commanders
UNIT COMMANDER
Issues TABs to Appropriate Personnel
FOD REPRESENTATIVE
TAB A
FIRE PREVENTION REPRESENTATIVE
TAB B
HEARING CONS REPRESENTATIVE
TAB C
ENV. CONTROL REPRESENTATIVE
TAB D
HAZMAT REPRESENTATIVE
TAB E
SAFETY REPRESENTATIVE
TABs F, G, H
RADIATION OFFICER
TAB I
UNIT SAFETY REP
Collects & Reviews TABs A-I
Completes Hazards Inventory Log
Conducts Safety Meeting
Completes Award Request
UNIT COMMANDER
Reviews Monthly Safety Packet
Signs Safety Meeting Report
Signs Awards Request
Signs First Page of Packet
BATTALION SAFETY OFFICER
Collects & Reviews all Packets
Consolidates Hazards Inventory Logs
Completes Executive Summary
BATTALION COMMANDER
Reviews & Signs all Packets

KNOW YOUR LIMITS

MAJ. MIKE BLADES
HHD, Joint Force Headquarters
Helena, Mont.

On a beautiful winter day, the Blades brothers set out for a snowmobiling trip at Island Park, Idaho. Although all three of us were experienced and seasoned riders, it had been awhile since my older brother and I had ridden. My younger brother owned his snowmobile and was more experienced, so he led the way through the trees on the winding, groomed trails.

As we went along the trail, I noticed how it began to narrow as the terrain became more challenging. My younger brother attempted to communicate via hand signals and calling out directions as we approached an opening. As we climbed the hill, I noticed my younger brother — who was ahead of us — had disappeared from sight.

Feeling confident in our snowmobiling skills, my older brother and I took on the challenge. However, the trees and terrain altered our perception of the trail's steepness. Unfortunately, we did not realize how steep the slope was until we were already committed.

We soon realized we had placed ourselves in a dangerous situation. My snowmobile tracks began to spin and I did not have the power or momentum to reach the top of the hill. Knowing my older brother was behind me, I veered to the right to turn around and go downhill. As I began my rapid descent, I quickly realized the trail's steepness was going to prevent me from stopping or controlling my snowmobile.

Racing down the slope toward a stand of pine trees, I realized I only had two options. I could ride it out and attempt to avoid the trees or I could bail off the rented snowmobile, for which I had luckily purchased full-coverage renters' insurance. Bailing off into the 3-foot-deep powder, I watched my snowmobile disappear into the pine trees and surrounding snow bank. As I lay in the snow regaining my composure, I realized this experience was not one I wanted to repeat.

This experience taught me that I am never too experienced to ignore safety. My brothers and I still tell the story of how our fun vacation could have turned tragic. During future trips, we made it a point to familiarize ourselves with our machines and the terrain and know our limits. We also made it a point to use standard snowmobiling hand signals.

Even though I survived my scare, snowmobiling accident statistics are alarming. During 2008, avalanches and speeding on snowmobiles were the main causes for more than 128 deaths and 1,352 injuries. Officials believe many more incidents went unreported.

While there are many resources on snowmobiling safety, I have found www.snowmobilers.org to be particularly useful. Here is some additional information to keep you safe on the snow:

Safety Tips

- Wear a helmet and eye protection at all times. Goggles with colored lenses are indispensable on bright days. In addition, amber or yellow lenses are useful on dark days or late in the afternoon.
- Dress for the ride. The outside of your snowmobiling outfit should have a hood and be windproof and waterproof. Beneath that, dress in layers, making sure the clothing is not too tight. Thermal underwear will help insulate you from the cold. Protect your hands with snowmobiling gloves designed to allow your thumb and fingers to operate the controls. Wear rubber-bottom, leather-top boots or rubber-bottom, nylon-top boots to help keep your feet warm and improve traction. Woolen socks can help keep Jack Frost from

nipping at your toes. Avoid loose clothing that could get caught on the snowmobile's moving parts.

- Do not let young or inexperienced riders operate snowmobiles without proper training and supervision.
- Do not use alcohol or other drugs when you ride.
- Learn your riding skills from an experienced rider or qualified trainer and practice them before going to the mountains.
- Always maintain a safe distance between riders. Following too closely can lead to collisions and injuries.
- Ride with other snowmobilers and let someone who is not riding know where you're going and when you plan on returning.
- Before riding, review all local snowmobile laws and obey them.
- Check local weather conditions and dress appropriately.
- Know the terrain where you will be riding so you'll be aware of potential hazards.
- Always use the proper arm and hand signals when riding with others.
- Always ride safely and responsibly. Know your abilities and those of your snowmobile and don't exceed them.
- Make sure your equipment is in top working order before hitting the trails.
- Carry a map or a global positioning system receiver to help you navigate the trails. Mark your route on a map and provide it to someone you know.
- Frequently clear the ice and snow off your snowmobile so it will run properly and others can see your lights.
- If you're going into an area where avalanches are a potential threat, get the latest avalanche forecasts and bring the proper gear and equipment.
- Be prepared for anything and use common sense.

Etiquette

- Be considerate of others on the trail and keep to the right.
- Slow down when passing.
- Ride only where permitted.
- Leave gates as you found them.
- Yield right of way to animals and hikers.
- Carry out what you carry in.
- Wave and say "hello" as you pass.
- Report downed trees and trail maintenance to land managers.
- Always help those who look in need. One day, that may be you.«

READY FOR THE RISK?
GRAT
GROUND RISK ASSESSMENT TOOL
https://safety.army.mil
Ground Risk Assessment Tool
GRAT-S
http://safety.army.smil.mil

The Ground Risk Assessment Tool is designed to aid in mitigating risk by reinforcing the five-step composite risk management process.

GRAT-S is now available and allows Leaders in forward-deployed units access to GRAT on the SIPRNET.

jammed collective

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 5 MARK A. MEYER
Department of Defense Field Research Activity
Fort Meade, Md.

I was a chief warrant officer company instructor pilot assigned to a Black Hawk unit. We were part of an air assault battalion, flying night vision goggles (NVG) in support of an upcoming 10-day field training exercise (FTX). Our mission was to conduct 10-ship air assaults.

We deployed to Camp Lejune, N.C., for the exercise. It was a typical Carolina summer with temperatures hitting 100 F-plus and 95 percent humidity during the day and cooling off very little in the evening. My job was to give pilot in command (PC) checkrides.

For the first mission, I had a warrant officer in the left seat. He was a strong pilot and a "good stick" for his hour level. I flew the first several nights in the right seat. Everything seemed to be going fine for the first couple of flights; however, I noticed the overhead map light cord stretched out, allowing the light to reach the cabin floor. I noted this as a possible hazard to the flight controls and briefed the other pilot of the potential problem. We switched seats to complete the requirements of the checkride. Again, I mentioned the problem with the map light cord. I recommended that he not use the map light; however, I did not forbid him from using it. After all, it was his checkride.

We flew the next several nights without incident, giving us a false sense of security. On this particular evening, we departed the landing zone as the trail aircraft in a flight of 10. Our mission was to conduct an air assault mission at low-level altitude.

Toward the end of the four-hour NVG mission en route to the forward arming refueling point, the warrant officer in the right seat asked if I was on the collective. I told him "no" and asked why he wanted to know. He said he could only pull partial power and that the collective was stopping midway. I immediately transferred my attention into the cockpit to assist the other pilot on the controls. Together, we still could not pull the collective past the midpoint. The UH-60 was descending at about 50 feet per minute toward the trees. I instinctively checked my collective in the left seat to ensure nothing was blocking it. Then I took my right hand and swept over the right seat collective, checking to see if something was resting on or blocking it, but I felt nothing.

Our mission had us over the

swamps of eastern North Carolina. The crew chief on the right side exclaimed that we were about to impact the trees. I made a quick scan around the area for a flight path with the fewest obstacles. To the left, I saw the dark green outline of a river running through the swamp. I was able to slow the airspeed and rate of descent as we headed toward the river. This maneuver gave us another 50 feet to solve the problem.

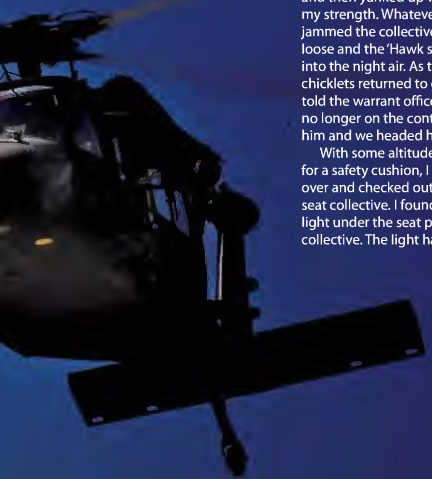
As we descended below the trees, I announced, "Brace for impact." In a last-ditch effort, I took the collective with both hands, slammed it to the floor and then yanked up with all my strength. Whatever had jammed the collective broke loose and the 'Hawk screamed into the night air. As the yellow chicklets returned to green, I told the warrant officer that I was no longer on the controls with him and we headed home.

With some altitude under us for a safety cushion, I reached over and checked out the right seat collective. I found the map light under the seat past the collective. The light had been dented from being stuck between the collective and seat support.

As a crew, we all took a few deep breaths to regain our composure and continued a quiet flight back to the field site. Once on the ground, we debriefed as a crew and informed the command of our near accident. Some of the lessons learned include:

- Never let anything near the collective; strap everything down.
- If you note a problem, no matter how minor, either get it fixed or write it up.
- "Circle Red X" the aircraft from use of the right-seat map light.
- Use strong crew coordination skills and work as a team. Seasoned crew chiefs using proper crew coordination techniques assisted with the positive outcome.
- Stay focused on the task regardless the mission routines. Complacency from flying much of the same-style missions had lulled us into a false sense of security.

For the record, this young warrant officer did much better on his PC re-evaluation and went on to become an upstanding member of the standardization community.«



"As we **DESCENDED** below the trees, I announced, **"BRACE FOR IMPACT."** In a last-ditch effort, I took the **COLLECTIVE** with both hands, **SLAMMED IT** to the floor and then **YANKED** up with **ALL MY STRENGTH.**"

LOST IN S

STAFF SGT. KIRK JOHNSON
Kenner Army Health Clinic
Fort Lee, Va.

How many times has a supervisor sent a young private into a confined space without first assessing the hazards? The aviation community has always been aware of the dangers of confined spaces when it comes to aviation fuel cells. But how many ground maintenance personnel are aware of the dangers that may exist in the water buffalo or fuel tanker even when they are empty?

Sometimes, we might think of a task as simple, when, in fact, it's not. Let's say a private is sent into a fuel tank, discovers the atmosphere is compromised and collapses. What do you do — send someone in there to save him, only to have that person collapse too? Half the confined space deaths happen to would-be rescuers. Even more are reported by the employer as heart attacks or other medical issues.

I recently completed a college class on urban technical rescue. We were allowed to dangle from a rope from a power plant while four stories above the ground; however, we weren't allowed to do any confined space work. The

> “We **HAVE TO REPAIR** systems — whether **FUEL** or **WATER**, ground or aviation — and it **REQUIRES** training **FOR ALL** who are **INVOLVED**, including **SUPERVISORS**.”

PACE

fire department and college system didn't want to take responsibility for confined space training, even though they had a controlled trainer on hand to do the work. That's how dangerous it can be.

To spread the message about confined space hazards, I held a class in my home state for the aviation community. The turnout was great, but I had to convince several of the shop chiefs that they also did confined space work. I finally persuaded them to send people to the class. However, they still do not consider going into a HEMTT or water buffalo to be confined space work. Are we failing to train shop chiefs about what is expected of them or their personnel?

As professionals, we need to look at everything that can injure or kill Soldiers. Do we? How often do we look at safety issues from outside of the box? We view our training and jobs as something we have to do to check the block. Why can't we conduct training outside our comfort zones?

We have to view confined spaces as hazards. We have to repair systems — whether fuel or water, ground or aviation — and it requires training for all who are involved, including supervisors. There is confined space training available, and we must seek it out to perform the mission safely.

We, as Leaders, need to know what is required of us. Sometimes we get so mission-focused that we fail to allow ourselves and our personnel to get the training we need. It's easy to ignore safety when we don't look at the hazards.«

The competition runs
Oct. 1, 2009 to April 30, 2010

For more information and contest rules for Peer to Peer, go to

https://safety.army.mil/videocompetition.

KNOWLEDGE

OFFICIAL SAFETY MAGAZINE OF THE U.S. ARMY

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Accidents occurred between Aug. 1-31, 2009

AVIATION

AH-64D

CLASS B

- The aircrew detected a burning odor in the cockpit during refueling at the forward arming refueling point. Maintenance reported fire emanating from the No. 2 engine. The aircrew conducted emergency shutdown procedures without further damage.

CH-47D

CLASS B

- The aircraft landing gear contacted a ground obstacle during a landing approach in dust conditions. The landing gear separated from the aircraft; however, the aircrew was able to land the aircraft without injuries.

MH-60K

CLASS A

- During high-altitude training, the aircraft crashed into the side of a mountain, resulting in four fatalities.

UH-60A

CLASS A

- The crew experienced brownout conditions while landing under night vision goggles. The aircraft touched down hard and overturned.

UH-60L

CLASS A

- The aircraft settled into trees during final approach. The four main rotor blades sustained damage. No personnel were injured.

CLASS B

- The aircraft touched down hard during landing under dusty conditions, causing structural damage.

FIXED-WING

C-12N

CLASS B

- During run-up for a fuel control replacement, a fire started in the No. 2 engine, resulting in the flames encompassing the right main landing gear. The aircraft was shut down without further incident.

UAS

MQ-5B

CLASS A

- While in flight, the rear engine quit and the unmanned aircraft (UA) lost 4,000 feet. The flight termination system was deployed, resulting in the UA touching down nose first, causing damage to the front of the fuselage and leading to the forward engine separating from the aircraft.

RQ-7B

CLASS B

- The air vehicle operator experienced an uncommanded spike in the RPM and cylinder temp indicators. This caused the UA to perform an uncommanded climb and eventual descent to ground contact. The UA was a total loss and recovered.

GROUND

AMV

CLASS A

- A Soldier was killed and two other Soldiers were injured when an M1083 ran off the road and 150 feet down an embankment during a resupply mission. The fatally injured Soldier was wearing a seat belt.

CLASS B

- Eight Soldiers were injured when their M923 5-ton truck overturned as they returned from a field training exercise. At the time of the accident, the driver had braked to avoid a deer in the road. The vehicle veered off the left side of the road and, as the driver attempted to re-enter the road, the bumper caught the edge of the pavement, causing the truck to overturn.

Personnel Injury

CLASS A

- A Soldier was conducting a recreational skydiving class when he lost his balance, fell out and struck the tail end of the aircraft.

- A Soldier drowned while swimming during a Family outing at a lake.

- A Soldier suffered fatal injuries while performing maintenance on an M4K forklift when the supporting chain snapped and dropped the hydraulic assembly, pinning him to the ground.

- A Soldier died after experiencing heat-related symptoms during a road march.

CLASS B

- A Soldier suffered a permanent partial disability injury when he struck his head on the ground while attempting to go through a low wire obstacle.

ARMY >>AVIATION LOSSES

Fiscal 2010

as of Nov. 3, 2009

	Class A/Fatalities
ATTACK	0/0
RECON	0/0
UTILITY	2/1
CARGO	1/0
TRAINING	0/0
FIXED-WING	1/0
UAS	0/0
TOTAL	4/1

ARMY >>GROUND LOSSES

Fiscal 2010

as of Nov. 3, 2009

	Class A/Fatalities
AMV	2/1
ACV	0/0
PERSONNEL INJURY includes weapons-handling accidents	3/3
FIRE/ EXPLOSIVE	0/0
PROPERTY DAMAGE	0/0
TOTAL	5/4

- Three Soldiers experienced heat-related injuries during a 15-kilometer night road march. The Soldiers were admitted for medical treatment, but none suffered permanent injuries.

- A Soldier lost a portion of his toe and fractured three other toes when he slipped in mud while mowing his lawn and his foot was caught in the mower blade.

DRIVING

POV

CLASS A

- A Soldier was driving his pickup truck when he lost control in a curve, exited the road and overturned. The Soldier was pronounced dead at the scene.

- A Soldier was driving his sport utility vehicle when he drifted off the side of the road, overcorrected and slid sideways until the vehicle overturned. The Soldier was not wearing his seat belt and was ejected. He was taken to a local medical center, where he was pronounced dead.

- A Soldier was speeding when his vehicle left the road, went down an embankment, struck a tree and overturned several times. The Soldier was fatally injured.

- A Soldier's vehicle struck an embankment, went airborne and then landed upside down in a water-filled creek. The Soldier was not wearing his seat belt. His body was found inside the car, where he had drowned.

CLASS C

- A Soldier was driving home from drill when her left-rear tire blew out, causing her to lose control and roll the vehicle. The Soldier was wearing her seat belt and hospitalized for one day.

POM

CLASS A

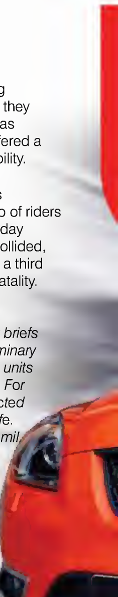
- A Soldier was exiting a roadway when she lost control of her sportbike on the off-ramp and struck a guardrail. The Soldier was transported to a hospital, where she was pronounced dead. The Soldier was wearing her helmet.

- A Soldier was riding on the back of her husband's motorcycle when they were struck by a vehicle that ran a red light. The Soldier, who was not wearing her helmet, was thrown from the motorcycle and killed.

- Two Soldiers were riding their motorcycles when they collided. One Soldier was killed and the other suffered a permanent partial disability.

- A Soldier was riding his motorcycle with a group of riders during a cross-country day ride. Two of the riders collided, causing a collision with a third rider that resulted in a fatality.

Editor's note: Information published in the accident briefs section is based on preliminary loss reports submitted by units and is subject to change. For more information on selected accident briefs, e-mail safe.knowledge@conus.army.mil.



POV DRIVING LOSSES

Fiscal 2010

as of Nov. 3, 2009	Class A/Fatalities
CAR	7/8
SUV/JEEP	1/1
TRUCK	1/1
MOTORCYCLE	3/3
PEDESTRIAN	0/0
OTHER*	0/0

*Includes: vans and ATVs

13 TOTAL DEATHS

Fiscal 2009: 8

3 year average: 10

DRIVE THE LIMIT!

- Speeding reduces a driver's ability to steer safely around curves or objects in the roadway, extends the distance necessary to stop a vehicle and increases the distance a vehicle travels while the driver reacts to a dangerous situation.

TRAVEL RISK
TRiPS
PLANNING SYSTEM

https://safety.army.mil

Be realistic about the distance
you can cover in a day.
Find out as the seasons change
and use the easy, online **TRiPS** tool today!

ARMY SAFE
FALL WINTER
NO TIME TO CHILL

U.S. ARMY
ARMY STRONG

U.S. ARMY COMBAT READINESS/SAFETY CENTER

ARMY SAFE
IS ARMY STRONG

BAND OF BROTHERS
& SISTERS